

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously presented) A method for suppressing proliferation of abnormal prion proteins, comprising systemically, orally, intracerebrally or intraspinally administering to a patient in need thereof an essential amino acid having a branched side chain.

2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, and mixtures thereof.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein said amino acid having a branched side chain is leucine.

4. (Previously presented) A method for providing an essential amino acid having a branched side chain to a patient in need thereof, comprising systemically, orally, intracerebrally or intraspinally administering said essential amino acid having a branched side chain so as to suppress proliferation of abnormal prion proteins.

5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, and mixtures thereof.

6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein said essential amino acid having a branched side chain is leucine.

7. (Original) A suppressive agent containing an essential amino acid having a branched side chain as an active ingredient for suppressing proliferation of abnormal prion proteins.

8. (Previously presented) The suppressive agent according to claim 7, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, and mixtures thereof.

9. (Previously presented) The suppressive agent according to claim 8, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is leucine.

10-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) A method for ~~treating~~ preventing prion diseases by suppressing proliferation of abnormal prion proteins which comprises systemically, orally, intracerebrally or intraspinally administering to a patient in need thereof an essential amino acid having a branched side chain as an active ingredient.

14. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is selected from the group consisting of leucine, isoleucine, valine, and mixtures thereof.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 13, wherein the essential amino acid having a branched side chain is leucine.

16. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said prion disease is scrapie.

17. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said prion disease is bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said prion disease is Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

19. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein said prion disease is Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker syndrome.